OPENING STATEMENT BY THE VICE-MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND INTEGRATION OF PARAGUAY, AMBASSADOR MANUEL MARIA CACERES
FOURTH MEETING OF MINISTERS OF TRADE OF LLDCS, ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN

September 12, 2012

Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Bakytzhan Sagintayev,
Minister of Industry and Trade of the People’s Democratic Republic of Lao, Mr. Nam Viyaketh,
Ministers, High-ranking Officers, Delegates of Member States,
Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, High Representative for Least Developed Countries, LLDCs and Small Island Developing States,
Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, Deputy Director-General of the WTO,
Mr. Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary-General of the UNCTAD,
High Authorities of International Organizations,
Observers and Special Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor for me to participate in this Meeting of Ministers of Trade of LLDCs. First of all, I would especially like to thank the Government and people of Kazakhstan for their hospitality and for hosting this event. It is of particular satisfaction to my country that the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Trade of our Group takes place in Almaty, a city that received us almost ten years ago in a significant Conference to our countries where we adopted the Program of Action. Thus, Almaty has already carved a place in the history of LLDCs, and we have no doubt that the outcomes of this meeting shall also substantially contribute to address the trade and development priorities of our Group paving the way for the Review Conference to be held in 2014.

Let me also give a warm welcome, on behalf of the Government of Paraguay, to Mr. Acharya, recently appointed High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, LLDCs, and Small Island Developing States. I would like to thank him for his participation in this meeting, it being one of his first official assignments in such position. This shows his interest and commitment toward our Group. We wish him success in his duties. Please rest assurers that you can count with the permanent support of my country.

This meeting takes place within an international economic context that is still fragile and uncertain. The current economic downturn it was not our maing, but we still have to face its consequences. Moreover, our group has been affected by a series of crisis related to energy, food, and the harmful effects of the climate change. On the other hand, the stagnation
of the Doha Development Round may negatively affect the fulfillment of the mandate to incorporate the “development dimension” into the Multilateral Trade System. Development should be the foundation and driving force of globalization. A fair, just, transparent, inclusive and foreseeable multilateral trade system based on development, should support the effective markets opening and the creation of opportunities for developing countries and particularly for the most vulnerable and small ones such as the LLDCs.

In this complex world scenario, LLDCs should struggle to achieve that our geographical disadvantage be mitigated and we may effectively participate in the multilateral trading system.

Since the recognition of our especial situation by the UN General Assembly, we have taken important steps toward the international recognition of the problems and special needs of Landlocked Countries. However, there is still a long way ahead until the international community may thoroughly understand the difficulties we face in order to achieve our development, eradicate poverty from our countries and be active participants in international trade.

As part of these efforts, we have institutionalized the Meetings of Ministers of Trade of LLDCs, which gather us today in its fourth edition, with the aim of analyzing the situation of our countries and our priorities, by joining efforts to overcome difficulties and achieving common positions in the different negotiation fora.

It is an honor for Paraguay to coordinate the Group of LLDCs on issues related to trade and development in Geneva. Allow me briefly to inform you on the activities and tasks performed in these areas as Coordinators of the Group, in particular, since the last ministerial meeting.

We have met in Asunción in 2005, Ulan Bator in 2007 and in Ezulwini in 2009, in order to establish a reference framework for negotiations of the Doha Round. Finally, we cannot forget the successful meetings we had at the margins of UNCTAD XII in Accra and the recent UNCTAD XIII in Doha in April of the present year.

We have mainly worked within the World Trade Organization in some areas related to negotiations of Trade Facilitation, through the presentation of several proposals related to freedom of transit. In this context, our intention is to have a legal instrument that contributes to the streamlining of trade, the elimination of barriers that increase costs to our trade, and the expedite movement.

In terms of the Aid of Trade Initiative, we have presented our concerns and expressed our needs in the Global Reviews of Aid for Trade held in 2007, 2009 and 2011, respectively, requesting a special attention to our countries. Aid for Trade can be an essential tool so that
the LLDCs may compensate in some way their condition, by improving their efficiency and economic competitiveness. In this sense, it is worth to point out that during the last programs of work adopted, references to the LLDCs have been included. We look forward to the upcoming Fourth Global Review to be held next year with a focus on the private sector and Global Value Chains.

An essential area referring to LLDCs is related with WTO accession. Eight members of our group are currently negotiating their accession to the WTO - a complex, long and expensive process. Our participation as Coordinators before different Working Groups is to make an appeal so that these countries of the Group shall not be requested grants which are beyond their economic, financial and development possibilities, and above all, that the particular and unchangeable condition of being a landlocked country may be taken into account. We hope that accession guidelines may be adopted for LLDCs, as those recently agreed upon for the Least Developed Countries.

Another important scenario of activity that Paraguay has been coordinating related to LLDCs is within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Since the creation of UNCTAD, we have place a special emphasis on our countries within its mandate, primarily taking into account that UNCTAD is the focal point in the United Nations System for trade, development and interrelated issues of finance, investment, technology and sustainable development.

In addition, in the last couple of years we have promoted the strengthening within UNCTAD, of the special attention give to LLDCs. Our delegation, as the Coordinator, led the LLDCs’ position throughout all the conferences preparatory process, in the selection of the theme and subthemes, and in the presentation of a “Position Paper” containing our group’s view.

It is worth pointing out that we did not have an easy task. However, the balance on the positioning of the LLDCs’ situation was positive, and certain areas and positions where advanced in connection with previous Conferences. Thus, the Doha Mandate, which builds on the Accra Accord, is the guide of the UNCTAD for the next four years, so the organization can keep on its work of support in favor of the LLDCs. In addition to transport and infrastructure, it has been established that the needs of LLDCs should be further addressed in areas of investment, trade and technical cooperation, one of the three work pillars of UNCTAD’s work.

Being the Group of countries which is less attractive to FDI, we have worked closely with the UNCTAD Investment Division. An Investment Forum aimed at LLDCs has been held, investment policy reviews and investment guides have been prepared for many LLDCs. Furthermore, the World Investment Report of the last three years includes a section devoted to LLDCs. In addition, there has been a close coordination with the Division for Africa, Least
Developed Countries and Special Programs, in charge of the LLDCs, whose support has always been permanent, and with the Division on Technology and Logistics, particularly referring to transport, infrastructure and trade facilitation. We hope to strengthen this relationship, and we believe that the high-level representation of UNCTAD at this meeting represents the commitment of the Secretary-General and all the organization towards our Group.

I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Petko Draganov, and Directors Anne Miroux, Taffere Tesfachew, and Guillermo Valles, and Mr. Gunter Fischer for their participation in our meeting, which we very much value. We particularly appreciate not only your presence today but also your continuous and permanent commitment to our group.

Dear colleagues,

We are sure that discussions and exchanges in this meeting will be very fruitful to all of us, and will provide valuable input to the challenges in front of us regarding the WTO, UNCTAD, the Review of the Almaty Program of Action and the successor plan.

I wish you all fruitful and constructive deliberations.

Thank you very much.